

THE PARISH CHURCH OF FINCHLEY.

THE report of the Council for the year 1927, printed with this "Part," of the TRANSACTIONS, record a meeting of the Society at the Parish Church of Finchley, when a resolution was passed deprecating the proposed alterations and additions.

Subsequently an application was made by the Rector of Finchley for a faculty to authorise the proposed changes in the structure of the church. The Chancellor of the Diocese of London reserved judgment; but at a sitting of the Consistory Court of London, on June 23rd, 1928, he delivered his judgment and refused the application.

The decision being of importance and moreover containing principles of general application, it is thought the members will be pleased to have the judgment at length as reported in *The Times* of June 25, 1928. It is here reprinted by the express permission of that newspaper:—

"The Chancellor, in delivering judgment, said there was no appearance in opposition to the application, which had the support of the Parochial Church Council and of the general body of its parochial electors. The church appeared to have been erected in the sixteenth century, taking the place of an earlier church. The civil parish had, of course, enormously increased its numbers; and since 1846 it had from time to time been divided for ecclesiastical purposes. That part of the original parish with which they were now dealing had a population estimated by the rector at 7,000, and he (the rector) did not anticipate any further increase. The working-class element was not large. The majority of the newcomers lived in small houses. The church electoral roll numbered 775. According to the rector's evidence, the support for this application came mainly from the new arrivals; the older inhabitants were not anxious for a change.

"The portion of the old church which remained undisturbed, or but slightly altered, was of very considerable architectural interest

and beauty. It included the tower, nave, north aisle, and part of the chancel, all dating from about 1541. It was now proposed—(1) To erect transepts on the north and south sides; (2) to extend the chancel some 19ft. to 21ft. eastward; and (3) to extend the main body of the church to the entrance of the new chancel. Apart from the change in the general appearance of the church, the actual interference with the old work was confined to the demolition of some 20ft. of the old north wall, and the taking down of two of the old centre arcades, which would be re-erected some slight distance eastward. The two windows in the part of the north wall to be demolished would be placed one on the west side of the new north transept, the other on the north side of the church farther east.

“The alterations involved an extension over the churchyard which would disturb 12 graves, and there were certain memorial windows, tablets, and brasses which would have to be moved, but could be replaced in similar positions when the extensions were completed. The total cost was estimated at £7,000, of which £500 was in hand and £1,600 promised. The alterations were therefore extensive and costly.

“In cases where it was desired to alter an old church there were two principles to be borne in mind, sometimes conflicting. The first was that the parish church was the place where the parishioners had the right to resort for public worship, and their needs were the foremost consideration. The second was that where the church was of architectural or other permanent interest it was the duty of the Court to see that so far as possible it descended unspoilt to future generations. The first is finally the predominant principle; but the second remained dominant until the first clearly superseded it.

“The present seating consisted of 525 permanent seats, with 30 drop seats. The alterations would provide 257 additional permanent seats at a cost of about £27 a seat. In the matter of accommodation the rector stated that on four or five occasions in the year not only were all the permanent and drop seats occupied, but 40 or 50 chairs had to be brought in and placed even in the porch and vestry. No doubt all comers to the church should be welcomed; but it was at least a matter for consideration whether an old and interesting parish church should be mutilated (if not too harsh a word) because of an influx of worshippers from outside which might be temporary and induced by the merits of a particular incumbent.

“Proceeding to consider the proposed alterations, the Chancellor observed that the plans in their final stage had not secured the approval of the Diocesan Advisory Committee. The reasons for the Committee's disapproval were communicated to the petitioners by a letter of June 1, 1927. The Committee stated they felt unable to advise the granting of a faculty for carrying out any scheme which involved destroying any part of the church, and they suggested a

further consultation with Mr. Forsyth, who, on their behalf, had made a close study of the building and had already sent to the petitioners a plan by way of diagram suggesting a somewhat different scheme, which might obviate the necessity of interfering with the old work.

“The onus was on the petitioners to prove that the needs of the parish were such as to necessitate the proposed enlargement, and, further, that the suggested alterations were in the circumstances the best possible. They had, he thought, proved the desirability, but not the necessity of an enlargement; they had proved occasional overcrowding and inconvenience in the organising of occasional services. That did not seem to him enough. Nor was he convinced by the evidence that it was beyond the wit of a present-day architect sufficiently to increase the seating accommodation without interfering with the older parts of the church or its general scheme. He did not think the petitioners had made out their case, and he must therefore refuse the application. He did so with the regret he always felt that the Court should have even the appearance of obstructing rather than furthering the good work that was being done by the rector with the loyal aid of the churchwardens and parochial church council in the parish. In refusing their application he did so without prejudice to any further application based on increasing needs, or on plans providing for additional space without impinging on the older work.”